

# Suppression of New Ideas & Innovation

Human history is riddled with examples of innovations and research that had been suppressed and derogated by the leading science community and the accepted scientific conventions of the time. Throughout human history, many innovators became the victims of the insults of the skeptical scientific, governmental and corporate power elites.

Many scientists and scholars know that disagreeing with the dominant view is risky, especially when that view is backed by powerful interest groups. When someone presents a new research, unconventional or unpopular scientific view, or comes out with a new way of doing things that threatens a powerful interest group, typically a government, industry or professional body, representatives of that group attack the innovator's ideas and the innovator personally. Such attacks are carried out by censoring writing, blocking publications, withdrawing or denying grants, taking legal actions, or spreading rumors.

What are the effects of suppression of new ideas, intellectual dissent, unconventional, or unpopular scientific views? Suppression is not only a denial of the open debate that is the foundation of a free society, it also creates artificial barriers and in effect retard innovation and creativity. Moreover, it has a chilling effect that breeds external censorship as well as self-censorship. If we can learn anything from the history of science, it is the dissidents and the unconventional thinkers who have spurred science on.

The following quotes and facts illustrate the initial hostile and trivializing attitude towards new ideas, scientific inquiries, and revolutionary discoveries.

"I watched his countenance closely, to see if he was not deranged... and I was assured by other Senators after we left the room that they had no confidence in it." --Reaction of Senator Smith of Indiana after Samuel Morse demonstrated his telegraph before member of Congress in 1842.

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."  
--Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977.

When Nobel Laureate Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar presented his ideas at the Royal Astronomical Society in January 1935, most famous astronomer at that time, Arthur Eddington, ridiculed his ideas. It took decades before the Chandrasekhar Limit was accepted by all astrophysicists and eventually his idea became the foundation for the theory of black holes. Chandrasekhar was awarded the 1983 Nobel Prize in physics.

Galileo's ideas about the universe were first dismissed as being impossible. The priests and aristocrats feared the worldview that his ideas were beginning to force upon people. Galileo was placed under house arrest until the end of his life.

Nobel prize-winning biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi never got funded for his work on the relevance of quantum physics to living organisms.

As documented by Dr. Brian Martin of University of Wollongong, in his books and articles (<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/>) Government scientists critical of nuclear power have lost their staff and have been transferred as a form of harassment.

"Mr. Bell, after careful consideration of your invention, while it is a very interesting novelty, we have come to the conclusion that it has no commercial possibilities." -- J. P. Morgan's comments on behalf of the officials and engineers of Western Union after a demonstration of the telephone.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." --Western Union internal memo, 1876.

When Scanning-tunneling microscope was invented in 1982, it was met by hostility and ridicule from the specialists in the microscopy field. In 1986, the inventors won the Nobel prize.

George Ohm's initial publication was met with ridicule and dismissal and it was called "a tissue of naked fantasy." Ten years later, scientists recognized its great importance.

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?" --David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" --H. M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927.

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."

--Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

"So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you.' And they said, 'No.' So then we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.'" --Apple Computer Inc. founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and H-P interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.

Stanford Ovshinsky's invention of glasslike semiconductors was attacked by physicists and ignored for more than a decade. Finally he got funding from the Japanese for his work. Consequently, the new science of amorphous semiconductor physics was born.

"Everything that can be invented has been invented." --Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899.

When Sherwood Rowland, Mario Molina and Paul Crutzen first warned that chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs, were destroying the ozone layer they were ridiculed for their work. In 1995, Rowland, Molina and Crutzen, won a Nobel Prize.

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends upon the unreasonable man." --G. B. Shaw.

In 1908 Billy Durant, in trying to raise money to create an automobile trust, boasted to J.P. Morgan & Co. "that the time would come when half a million automobiles a year will be running on the roads of this country." This annoyed Morgan partner George W. Perkins who said "If that fellow has any sense, he'll keep those observations to himself." Unable to raise capital in Wall Street, Durant went home and put together something called *General Motors*.

When Warren and his team introduced a new facet to MRI theory, his colleagues at Princeton told him that his insane ideas were endangering his career. They held a mean-spirited bogus presentation mocking his work. After seven years, Warren was vindicated. His discoveries are leading to the development of new MRI techniques.

During 1903 to 1908, Wrights' claims about their airplane invention were not believed. Most American scientists discredited the Wrights and proclaimed that their mechanism was a hoax.

When Thomas Edison became successful with a light bulb filament he invited members of the scientific community to observe his demonstration. Although many from the general public went to witness the lamp, the noted scientists refused to attend. Sir William Siemens, England's most distinguished engineer said "Such startling announcements as these should be deprecated as being unworthy of science and mischievous to its true progress." Professor Du Moncel said "The Sorcerer of Menlo Park appears not to be acquainted with the subtleties of the electrical sciences. Mr. Edison takes us backwards."

"Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction." --Pierre Pacht, Professor of Physiology, 1872.

"Airplanes are interesting toys, but of no military value." -- Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

### **Famous Quotations on New Ideas & Innovation**

"If at first, the idea is not absurd, there is no hope for it." -- Albert Einstein.

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."--Arthur Schopenhauer.

"At their first appearance innovators have always been derided as fools and mad men." -- Aldous Huxley.

"Every great advance in science has been issued from a new audacity of the imagination" --John Dewey.

"That which seems the height of absurdity in one generation often becomes the height of wisdom in the next" --John Stuart Mill.

"Problems cannot be solved by thinking within the framework in which the problems were created" -- Albert Einstein.

"No great discovery was ever made without a bold guess"  
--Isaac Newton.

"That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of our time" --John Stuart Mill.

"The study of history is a powerful antidote to contemporary arrogance. It is humbling to discover how many of our glib assumptions, which seem to us novel and plausible, have been tested before, not once but many times and in innumerable guises; and discovered to be, at great human cost, wholly false."--Paul Johnson

"Concepts which have proved useful for ordering things easily assume so great an authority over us, that we forget their terrestrial origin and accept them as unalterable facts. They then become labeled as "conceptual necessities", etc. The road of scientific progress is frequently blocked for long periods by such errors." --Albert Einstein

"All great truths began as blasphemies." --George Bernard Shaw

All of the above can be found on the Home Page of Scientific Journals International

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